

INTRODUCTION

Giuseppe Mazzini's International Political Thought

GIUSEPPE MAZZINI (1805–72) is today largely remembered as the chief inspirer and leading political agitator of the Italian Risorgimento. Yet Mazzini was not merely an Italian patriot, and his influence reached far beyond his native country and his century. In his time, he ranked among the leading European intellectual figures, competing for public attention with Mikhail Bakunin and Karl Marx, John Stuart Mill and Alexis de Tocqueville. According to his friend Alexander Herzen, the Russian political activist and writer, Mazzini was the “shining star” of the democratic revolutions of 1848. In those days Mazzini’s reputation soared so high that even the revolution’s ensuing defeat left most of his European followers with a virtually unshakeable belief in the eventual triumph of their cause.¹

Mazzini was an original, if not very systematic, political thinker. He put forward principled arguments in support of various progressive causes, from universal suffrage and social justice to women’s enfranchisement. Perhaps most fundamentally, he argued for a reshaping of the European political order on the basis of two seminal principles: *democracy* and *national self-determination*. These claims were extremely radical in his time, when most of continental Europe was still under the rule of hereditary kingships and multinational empires such as the Habsburgs and the Ottomans. Mazzini worked primarily on people’s minds and opinions, in the belief that radical political change first requires cultural and ideological transformations on which to take root. He was one of the first political agitators and public intellectuals in the contemporary sense of the term: not a solitary thinker or soldier but rather a political leader who sought popular support and participation. Mazzini’s ideas had an extraordinary appeal for generations of progressive nationalists and revolutionary leaders from his day until well into the twentieth century: his life and writings inspired several patriotic and anticolonial movements in Europe, Latin America, and

¹ Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, trans. C. Garnett, intro. Isaiah Berlin (New York: Knopf, 1968), 687, 694.

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the Middle East, as well as the early Zionists, Gandhi, Nehru, and Sun Yat-Sen.²

It was Mazzini's conviction that under the historical circumstances of his time, only the nation-state could allow for genuine democratic participation and the civic education of individuals. To him, the nation was a necessary intermediary step in the progressive association of mankind, the *means* toward a future international "brotherhood" among all peoples. But the nation could never be an end in itself. Mazzini sincerely believed that cosmopolitan ideals and national sentiment would be complementary, so long as the rise of an aggressive nationalism could be prevented through an adequate "sentimental education." As we will argue in more detail below, he was thus a republican *patriot* much more than a nationalist. The nation itself had for him a primarily political character as a democratic association of equals under a written constitution. Like a few other visionaries of his time, Mazzini even thought that Europe's nations might one day be able to join together and establish a "United States of Europe." His more immediate hope was that by his activism, his writings, and his example, he would be able to promote what today we might call a genuine *cosmopolitanism of nations*—that is, the belief that universal principles of human freedom, equality, and emancipation would best be realized in the context of independent and democratically governed nation-states.

Mazzini clearly believed that the spread of democracy and national self-determination would be a powerful force for peace in the long run, although the transition might often be violent. Where oppressive regimes and foreign occupation made any peaceful political contestation virtually impossible, violent insurrection would be legitimate and indeed desirable. Democratic revolutions would be justified under extreme political circumstances. However, he expected that once established, democratic nations would be likely to adopt a peace-seeking attitude in their foreign relations. Democracies would become each others' natural allies; they would cooperate for their mutual benefit and, if needed, jointly defend their freedom and independence against the remaining, hostile despotic regimes. Over time, democracies would also set up various international agreements and formal associations among themselves, so that their cooperation would come to rest on solid insti-

²Gita Srivastava, *Mazzini and His Impact on the Indian National Movement* (Allahabad, India: Chugh, 1982); Jorge Myers, "Giuseppe Mazzini and the Emergence of Liberal Nationalism in the River Plate and Chile," in C. A. Bayly and E. F. Biagini, *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Denis Mack Smith, *Mazzini* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 219; Michael Howard, *War and the Liberal Conscience* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1978), 49.

tutional foundations. In this sense, Mazzini clearly anticipated that constitutional republics would establish and gradually consolidate a separate “democratic peace” among each other. He did so much more explicitly than Immanuel Kant, as we will argue below.

For these reasons, Mazzini deserves to be seen as the leading pioneer of the more activist and progressive “Wilsonian” branch of liberal internationalism. There is indeed some evidence that President Woodrow Wilson, who later elevated liberal internationalism into an explicit foreign policy doctrine, was quite influenced by Mazzini’s political writings. On his way to attend the 1919 peace conference in Paris, Wilson visited Genoa and paid tribute in front of Mazzini’s monument. The American president explicitly claimed on that occasion that he had closely studied Mazzini’s writings and “derived guidance from the principles which Mazzini so eloquently expressed.” Wilson further added that with the end of the First World War he hoped to contribute to “the realization of the ideals to which his [Mazzini’s] life and thought were devoted.”³

HIS LIFE AND TIMES

Mazzini was born on June 22, 1805, in Genoa, a city with a glorious republican past that was quite arbitrarily handed over to the Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia at the Congress of Vienna in 1815. The Kingdom of Piedmont-Sardinia itself was one of eight Italian states that had been reinstated after the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. All those states were ruled by nonconstitutional, autocratic governments. They were nominally independent, although most of them depended on Austrian protection and were de facto satellites of the Austrian Empire (with the exception of sizeable territories around Venice and Milan, which were directly ruled by Austria). Patriotic sentiments had begun to spread among Italian elites during Napoleon’s rule (1805–14), when large parts of the Italian territory had been politically unified. The ensuing Restoration and renewed political dismemberment of Italy led to growing demands for the granting of constitutional charters and independence from foreign rule.

Italian patriots were inspired by the example of constitutionalist insurrections in Spain in 1820, which also rekindled older memories of the Neapolitan revolution of 1799 that had resulted in a brief republican interlude. A first wave of uprisings took place in the kingdoms of Naples and Piedmont between 1820 and 1821, yet all those movements

³Woodrow Wilson, “Remarks about Giuseppe Mazzini” and “Further Remarks in Genoa,” *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Arthur S. Lind (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), 53:614–15. See also Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 221.

were brutally and quite easily crushed. In 1821 an Austrian expeditionary corps was sent to Naples for “peacekeeping” purposes under the auspices of the Holy Alliance (the alliance of Europe’s counterrevolutionary great powers, led by Russia, Austria, and Prussia); this emboldened the local Bourbon king to repeal even the modest constitutional reforms he had previously granted. The repression was extremely harsh, with the execution or imprisonment of many revolutionary leaders and patriotic conspirators throughout Italy. It was in this tumultuous political environment that the young Mazzini was coming of age.

Mazzini’s middle-class background (his father was a medical doctor) allowed him to pursue advanced studies in law as well as literature. Very soon he became attracted to and familiar with romantic poetry and idealist philosophy: he read and admired the works of Vico, Herder, Goethe, Fichte, the Schlegel brothers, and Schelling, and he wrote some innovative essays on the character of Italian literature from Dante Alighieri to Ugo Foscolo (a poet of great patriotic appeal in Mazzini’s times). Later in his twenties, he turned his attention more explicitly toward social and political thought: his main points of reference during this period were the French priest and democratic philosopher Félicité de Lamennais and the Saint-Simonians. But Mazzini’s temperament did not fit him for a life of tranquil intellectual pursuits. He soon became involved in the Italian struggle for national independence and quickly emerged as its leading theoretician and most charismatic political agitator. Already as a young lawyer and promising literary critic, Mazzini had joined the secret Carbonari society, an offshoot of Freemasonry that organized the Italian patriotic resistance throughout the early decades after the Restoration. However, he soon broke with the Carbonari over disagreements concerning their excessive secrecy and detachment from the people. Mazzini believed that what Italy needed was not an elitist constitutionalist conspiracy but instead a truly popular movement, based on a clear and well-defined republican revolutionary program.⁴ In this sense he held a consistently democratic outlook, not only concerning his ultimate goal—government by the people and for the people—but also with regard to political action as a means to get there.

In 1830, after a short time in prison on charges of subversive activism against Austria’s imperial rule, Mazzini left Italy. He spent most of his remaining life in exile, and from 1837 onward London became his home of choice. In London he continued to publish assiduously, while also attempting to coordinate what he saw as an emergent pan-European struggle against the imperial domination of the Habsburgs, Romanovs, and Ottomans over Italy, Central Europe, and the Balkans. As early as 1831, as an exile in France he had founded the revolutionary organiza-

⁴See Indro Montanelli, *Storia d’Italia 1831–1861* (Milan: RCS Libri, 1998), 40.

tion “Giovine Italia” (Young Italy), which promoted the patriotic ideal among Italy’s educated middle classes and coordinated insurrectionary activities throughout the Italian Peninsula. Mazzini’s organization became Italy’s first political party, with its own newspaper and propaganda apparatus, although given the lack of constitutional freedoms it operated largely underground or from abroad (about one hundred years later, his method would inspire Italian anti-Fascist organizations in their fight against a new kind of tyranny).⁵ Alongside Young Italy, Mazzini tried to set up similar patriotic organizations for Germany, Greece, Spain, Russia, and Poland. In 1834, while in Switzerland, he founded a new revolutionary association ambitiously called “Young Europe,” with a dozen refugees from Italy, Poland, and Germany. This was one of the first transnational political associations, and it fostered a lively exchange of ideas among its members. Most of the ensuing insurrections and guerrilla operations inspired by Mazzini in Italy and elsewhere were utter failures from a strictly military point of view. Nevertheless, at least as far as Italy is concerned, Mazzini’s revolutionary activism probably contributed more than anything else to the spread of patriotic sentiments among the politically alert population.⁶

Mazzini’s influence and his actual political career reached their zenith in the spring of 1849. For a short period of about three months, he was able to return to Italy and stood at the center of European events. Following a popular revolt against the pope’s despotic and theocratic regime in central Italy, in March 1849 a constituent assembly abolished the temporal power of the papacy and proclaimed the Roman Republic. Mazzini’s popularity in revolutionary circles virtually preordained him to become the republic’s de facto political leader. This was the only time during his entire life that he held any kind of political office. Several independent observers and foreign diplomats stationed in Rome admitted that during his short tenure, Mazzini displayed surprising administrative capacity and diplomatic skills. (Lord Palmerston, then British foreign secretary, reportedly described Mazzini’s diplomatic dispatches from Rome as “models of reasoning and argument.”⁷) The republic’s citizens universally enjoyed personal and political freedoms, including press freedom, religious freedom, due process, and equality among the

⁵ This was certainly the case for the clandestine movement “Giustizia e Libertà” (Justice and Freedom) founded and led by Carlo Rosselli (himself a Mazzinian) during his exile in Paris, until he was assassinated by the Fascists in 1937. See Nadia Urbinati, introduction to Carlo Rosselli, *Liberal Socialism* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994).

⁶ Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 5–8. For a detailed history of Young Italy and Young Europe, see Franco Della Peruta, *Mazzini e i rivoluzionari italiani: Il partito d’azione, 1830–1845* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1974), chaps. 2–3.

⁷ Quoted in Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory: Machiavelli, Grotius, Kant, and Mazzini* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 113; see also Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 67.

sexes, as well as some basic social rights, to an extent unequalled anywhere else in Europe at the time. But faced with such a radical political challenge, Europe's conservative powers did not simply look on. Under France's leadership (France, led by Louis Napoleon, was itself a crumbling republic at the time), they quickly organized a military intervention to crush Mazzini's political experiment in Rome and reinstate the pope. The Roman Republic eventually succumbed in June 1849, after a fierce and in many regards honorable resistance (hundreds of French war prisoners were regularly set free under Mazzini's orders as a sign of republican friendship). A merciless papal restoration ensued, and Mazzini soon returned to his exile in London. But the passionate defense of Rome by an army of volunteers under Giuseppe Garibaldi's command had been a considerable moral success. Mazzini's personal reputation among republicans and progressives in Italy and all over Europe came out greatly enhanced, and the siege of Rome probably won him more widespread support than he enjoyed at any other time in his life.⁸

After the failed uprisings and republican experiments of 1848–49, Mazzini slowly became detached from the Italian popular masses, who were increasingly drawn toward communist and socialist doctrines. As a republican, Mazzini had always been first and foremost the representative of middle-class aspirations; he was scarcely familiar with the popular "multitudes," and in turn the illiterate masses of nineteenth-century Italy knew little of his revolutionary project. But his explicit opposition to any form of organized class conflict in later years of his life, and his related insistence that the "social question" ought to be resolved in a consensual, nonconflictual manner, undoubtedly contributed to diverting large sectors of the nascent urban working class into the socialist camp. Revolutionary socialists, that is, followers of Karl Marx's International, regarded Mazzini as their opponent. Their antagonism was not unfounded, as suggested by Mazzini's harsh condemnation of the Paris Commune in 1871.⁹ With Mazzini, Italian republicanism became divorced from socialism and in particular Marxist socialism.

From the late 1850s onward, Mazzini also grew increasingly disenchanted with the advancement of Italian national unification under Piedmont's monarchical leadership, which he saw as utterly incompatible with his republican ideals. Throughout his life, he feared that if patriotic movements lost their sense of humanitarian *duty* and ended up exploited by a short-sighted monarchical leadership or by self-serving oligarchies, they might quickly degenerate into a chauvinistic and bel-

⁸Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 75.

⁹See Mazzini, "Neither Pacifism nor Terror: Considerations on the Paris Commune and the French National Assembly," [1871] chapter 13 of this book.

licose nationalism.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Mazzini remained a highly influential moral voice in Italian and European republican circles until his death in 1872. He actually produced some of his most original essays, especially on international relations, in this latter period.

DUTIES BEFORE RIGHTS: MAZZINI'S MORAL AND POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

With the French Revolution, and as a reaction against Napoleon's subsequent expansionism, the *individual* and the *nation* emerged as the two modern agents of political legitimacy. They became the symbols of political and moral resistance against all kinds of imperial projects, as brilliantly illustrated by Kant's 1795 warning against a "despotism without soul" or Benjamin Constant's 1814 dissection of Europe's illiberal and belligerent imperialism.¹¹ Undoubtedly Mazzini is part of this legacy, which he actually advanced further by emphasizing the importance of national independence and self-determination as *means* to human progress and emancipation.

Mazzini clearly believed in cosmopolitanism as a *moral* ideal, although he was somewhat ambivalent toward the actual term *cosmopolitanism*, which he associated with Benthamite utilitarian philosophy. Speaking for his republican movement, he claimed in 1847: "We are all Cosmopolitans, if by Cosmopolitanism we understand the love and brotherhood of all, and the destruction of all barriers which separate the Peoples."¹² Yet in his view, those who merely asserted their belief in

¹⁰ Mazzini opposed in particular Prime Minister Cavour's political realism, which manifested itself in an international alliance policy devoid of moral scruples. For its part, the conservative Piedmontese government eventually understood that it could not defeat the Mazzinian revolutionaries; hence after 1850 it increasingly began to exploit them for its own purposes. In particular, the Piedmontese government was able to gain French support for its own expansionist policy, which it justified as necessary to "contain revolution." By late 1860, the Piedmontese had successfully annexed most of the Italian territories. Italy's national unification was thus completed in a top-down fashion, and it largely succeeded thanks to Prime Minister Cavour's astute international alliance diplomacy. All this stood in open contrast to almost anything that Mazzini had ever taught about the need to unify Italy *with* the popular masses, not against them or without them, and above all by painstakingly avoiding tactical alliances with foreign despots. See Montanelli, *Storia d'Italia*, 77, 413–15, 444.

¹¹ Immanuel Kant, "Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch" [1795], in *Kant: Political Writings*, ed. Hans Reiss (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Benjamin Constant, *De l'esprit de conquête et de l'usurpation dans leurs rapports avec la civilisation européenne* (Paris: Flammarion, 1993 [1814]). The following two sections of the introduction partially build on Nadia Urbinati, "In the Legacy of Immanuel Kant: Giuseppe Mazzini's Cosmopolitanism of Nations," in *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism*.

¹² Mazzini, "Nationality and Cosmopolitanism" [1847], chapter 3 of this book, 58.

humanity and fought for individual freedoms without also struggling for national self-determination were bound to fail, for disjoined individuals would at best only “be able to worship Humanity in idle contemplation.”¹³ The specific stage of development reached by humanity in nineteenth-century Europe required that people become associated with each other in democratically governed nation-states, in order to further advance along the ladder of human progress.

Mazzini’s entire political thought pivots around the notion of duties: toward oneself, the family, the nation, and humanity as a whole. Indeed, it would not be too far-fetched to identify Mazzini as the prophet of a “religion of duty.” He became increasingly obsessed with the idea of duties—and patriotic duties in particular—after the defeat of the democratic revolutions of 1848–49, when many Italian patriots increasingly came to rely on the leadership of the king of Piedmont-Sardinia. Mazzini felt that the goal of *popular* self-determination was being abandoned for the sake of mere national unification, without regard to the form of government that would be established. He sought to counter this trend, which he perceived as potentially dangerous, by insisting on the need to believe in and fight for the nation conceived as a patriotic association of equals.

Yet while stressing the importance of patriotic duties, or national solidarity, Mazzini never meant to dismiss the value of *individual rights*. He actually thought that individual rights were an unquestionable achievement of the modern age. This is a characteristic of his political thought that has often been overlooked, if not outright misunderstood. Both the constitution of the Roman Republic of 1849 and his rough constitutional proposal for a future Italian republic were based on civil and political individual rights, and their equal distribution.¹⁴ Mazzini believed so much in rights as to give them moral and political primacy over collective self-determination. Thus in principle, he placed individual rights above popular sovereignty: “But there are certain things that are constitutive of your very individuality and are essential elements of human life. Over these, not even the People have any right. No majority may establish a tyrannical regime.”¹⁵

¹³Mazzini, “Nationalism and Nationality” [1871], chapter 3 of this book, 63. See also Bolton King, *The Life of Mazzini* (London: Dent and Sons, 1911), 306.

¹⁴See “On the Superiority of Representative Government,” chapter 2 of this book.

¹⁵Mazzini then goes on to enumerate those rights: “You have a right to liberty in everything that is necessary to the moral and material sustenance of life: personal liberty; liberty of movement; liberty of religious faith; liberty of opinion; liberty of expressing that opinion through the press, or by any other peaceful means; liberty of association, in order to render that opinion fruitful through contacts and exchanges with others; liberty of labor; liberty of trade.” Cf. Mazzini, “On the Duties of Man” [1841–60], chapter 5 of this book, 97. See also Alessandro Levi, *La filosofia politica di Giuseppe Mazzini*, ed. Salvo Mastellone (Naples: Morano Levi, 1967 [1916]), 202.

What Mazzini questioned was that one could rely on the language of rights to justify and advance the politics of nationality. He correctly perceived rights in their liberal formulation as antagonistic to political power and as protective shields against power. Yet liberal rights in and of themselves would be unable to *mobilize* the people, to *sustain* associations among individuals, and finally to *morally justify* national self-determination. Living in London, the capital city of utilitarianism, during the golden age of laissez-faire liberalism, Mazzini came to believe that the “theory of rights” was essentially a theory of selfishness, or self-centeredness. The Enlightenment theory of rights taught that society had been instituted to secure material interests. In his view, this philosophy encouraged everyone to look only “after his own rights and the improvement of his own position, without seeking to provide for others.”¹⁶

In other words, Mazzini regarded liberal rights discourse as conservative in relation to a good (the individual) it essentially took as a given. Mere belief in liberal rights would be unsuited to galvanize the people into a life of sacrifice and struggle, which would be necessary to overthrow Europe’s despotic regimes and bring about genuine popular self-determination. He therefore insisted that the “struggle against injustice and error for the benefit of one’s brothers is not only a *right* but a *Duty*.”¹⁷ Like the Saint-Simonians, Mazzini thought that the new age would be one of collective purposes, marked by the primacy of duty and various forms of association. He saw national self-determination as a *constitutive* politics, and thus as the necessary condition for the implementation of liberal rights, rather than a liberal right itself.¹⁸

In contemporary language we might say that Mazzini gave the name of rights to what we call negative liberty (freedom as noninterference), while he linked his notion of duty to what we call positive liberty (freedom as autonomy and self-development.) The former lies at the origin of any bill of rights and aims at power limitation; the latter is an expression of self-determination that is essential to any democratic political founding. But Mazzini did not articulate this distinction in clear language

¹⁶ Mazzini, “On the Duties of Man,” chapter 5 of this book, 82.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 83. See also E. Vaughan, *Studies in the History of Political Philosophy before and after Rousseau* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1960), 266. As Carlo Cantimori perspicaciously argued, Mazzini’s intuition was that the criterion to judge a philosophy ought to be practical—we should look at it from the point of view of the actions it inspires. Theoretical truth lies in practical reason. Cf. Cantimori, *Saggio sull’idealismo di Mazzini* (Faenza: Montanari, 1904), 285.

¹⁸ In Mazzini’s own words, the cause of nationality should not be “one of simple reaction, or of material well-being, or of mere rights to be recognized.” Cf. Mazzini, *Letters*, trans. A. De Roses Jervis, introduction and notes by Bolton King (Westport, CT: Hyperion Press, 1979), 76.

and with an adequate political terminology. Furthermore, like other theorists of positive liberty from which he drew inspiration (most notably Rousseau), he did not translate his religion of duty into a fully developed theory of constitution making and institution building. He believed it was not the task of revolutionary agitators and political thinkers like himself to enter into the specifics of democratic constitutional design, which should rather be dealt with by future constituent assemblies according to the specific circumstances of time and place. In Mazzini's own words:

We have always been careful to lay out the moral principles from which we derive our right and our duty to act. . . . But beyond this, we believe that it is for the people themselves, with their collective wisdom and the force of their intuition that have been sharpened by the experience of great insurrections, to resolve the problem at hand. To put it differently: the people themselves ought to erect the specific institutional structure that will allow future generations to benefit from peace and development for many centuries to come.¹⁹

Mazzini had a wholly modern view of democracy as a popular form of government based on the sovereignty of the nation, where the nation is a political association of citizens represented by elected representatives. The terms *democracy* and *republic* are virtually synonymous to him; they symbolize a political project against oppression and despotic rule, and their ultimate goal is the emancipation of individual human beings. Yet Mazzini appears to have fundamentally underestimated the importance of constitutional safeguards to actually protect those individual liberties whose primacy he proclaimed in the abstract. His ambivalence in this regard emerges most clearly from one of his early writings, where he straightforwardly claims that "the nation's power is unlimited" and then goes on to insist that "any restrictions brought to . . . the deputies' ultimate choice would contradict the principle of national sovereignty."²⁰ This complete reliance on citizens' republican virtue and their sense of duty, combined with an apparent lack of awareness that individual rights need to be constitutionally protected, have led some critics to portray Mazzini as a quasi-Jacobin.²¹

¹⁹ Mazzini, "Toward a Holy Alliance of Peoples" [1849], chapter 7 of this book, 124.

²⁰ Mazzini, "On the Superiority of Representative Government" [1832], chapter 2 in this book, 51.

²¹ See, e.g., Gaetano Savemini, *Mazzini*, trans. I. M. Rawson (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1957), 56–61; Luigi Salvatorelli, *The Risorgimento: Thought and Action*, trans. M. Domandi (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 97; and Bruce Haddock, "State and Nation in Mazzini's Political Thought," *History of Political Thought* 20 (1999): 324–27.

A DEMOCRATIC CONCEPTION OF THE NATION

One of the most puzzling questions for theorists of nationalism has always been to explain why some forms of nationalism are a threat to peace and democracy while others are not, or how to recognize, in Michael Walzer's words, "exactly when nationalism turns into chauvinism and under what conditions."²² Scholars in the twentieth century developed the distinction between, on the one hand, a "naturalistic" or organicistic conception of the nation, and on the other hand, a "voluntaristic" or associational one.²³ The former assumes the existence of some prepolitical factors without which a nation cannot exist; the latter pays attention only to the political factor—it insists on the popular *will* to become a nation and draws on Ernest Renan's famous statement that "the nations' existence is . . . a daily plebiscite."²⁴

This scholarship claimed that "bad" chauvinistic nationalism had evolved out of the naturalistic conception of the nation first put forward by German romantic philosophers, while the "good" democratic cause of national self-determination was seen as an offspring of the voluntaristic conception developed by French republicanism.²⁵ The distinction is perspicacious but not quite satisfactory. Putatively "voluntaristic" nations such as France have not necessarily been less prone than others to develop chauvinistic and imperialist policies, as attested by two French empires and their attendant expansionism. Furthermore, the dualism between naturalistic and voluntaristic conceptions of the nation does

²²Michael Walzer, "Only Connect," *The New Republic*, August 13, 1990, 34.

²³A cornerstone in this research is Friedrich Meinecke's *Cosmopolitanism and the National State* [1907], a political treatise in the anti-Enlightenment tradition that laid out an organicist conception of the nation as "a natural core based on blood relationships." Cf. Friedrich Meinecke, *Cosmopolitanism and the National State*, trans. R. B. Kimer, ed. Felix Gilbert (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1970), 9. Meinecke's analysis and definition of the nation would later encourage Hans Kohn and Federico Chabod, two influential historians, to distinguish between "naturalistic" and "voluntaristic" conceptions of the nation. See Hans Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism: A Study of Its Origins and Background* (New York: Macmillan, 1944); Federico Chabod, *L'idea di nazione* (Bari: Laterza, 1962); see also Anthony D. Smith, *Theories of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1983).

²⁴Ernest Renan, "What Is a Nation?" [1882], in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races and Other Studies*, trans. W. G. Hutchison (New York: Kennikat, 1970), 80–81. Renan was rephrasing Michelet who had written forty years earlier that "la volonté de s'unir, c'était déjà l'unité des coeurs, la meilleure unité peut-être." Cf. Jules Michelet, *Histoire de la révolution française*, ed. Gérard Walter, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1952), 1:423.

²⁵Kohn, *The Idea of Nationalism*; Chabod, *L'idea di nazione*; see also Johan Huizinga, "Patriotism and Nationalism in European History," in *Men and Ideas: History, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance*, trans. J. S. Holmes and H. van Marle (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 108.

not allow us to properly situate and understand Mazzini's own peculiar idea of *democratic nationality*.

Mazzini's conception of the nation does not imply, and certainly does not require, indifference toward the so-called prepolitical factors. He considered language, territory, and ethnicity to be *indications* of the nation—probably necessary but not sufficient for the emergence of self-determining political units, and certainly unable in and of themselves to legitimate national independence. Hence Mazzini looked beyond the prepolitical factors. Political equality and popular consent play a decisive normative role in his democratic conception of the nation, because without them, no political autonomy is possible, and the prepolitical factors remain without a legitimating voice. The nation, he wrote in 1835, has to stand “for equality and democracy”—only under this condition does it represent a genuine “commonality of thought and destiny.” In a Rousseauian vein, he was convinced that without “a general and uniform law” there could be neither peoples nor nations, but only castes and privileges—at most a “multitude” of interest-bearers bound together by convenience alone.²⁶ Mazzini's conception of the nation is therefore inherently democratic, and it stands in outright opposition to the aristocratic principle.²⁷ However, according to his demanding standard of political legitimacy, political factors such as consent and the popular will are ultimately not sufficient either. In particular, they cannot by themselves make national self-determination democratic.

The originality of Mazzini's democratic conception of the nation springs from his intuition that although national politics must be legitimized by the popular will, *the popular will itself should actually be restrained*. This restraining force can only result from people's acknowledgement of a superior “law of Humanity”—that is, of a universalistic criterion that ought to guide them domestically, as well as in their interaction with other nation-states. Relying on the will and consent alone, and without certain fundamental moral constraints, the nation-state can become whatever it wants and even pursue a politics of hegemony and expansion. Hence for Mazzini, any legitimate patriotic pursuit always needs to be limited by reference to a universal maxim that bears some striking resemblance to Kant's categorical imperative: “Always ask yourselves . . . : *If what I am now doing were done by all men, would it be beneficial or harmful to Humanity?*” And if your conscience tells you it

²⁶Giuseppe Mazzini, “Nationalité. Quelques idées sur une constitution nationale” [1835], in *Scritti editi ed inediti*, 100 vols. (Imola: Tipografia Galeati, 1906–43), 6:125, 134. See also Mazzini, “Nationality and Cosmopolitanism,” chapter 3 of this book.

²⁷Mazzini, “Nationalism and Nationality,” chapter 3 of this book, 65.

would be harmful, desist from acting; desist even though it might seem that an immediate advantage to your country . . . would be the result.”²⁸ Ultimately, Mazzini’s fundamental distinction between a benevolent, republican *patriotism* and a belligerent, chauvinistic *nationalism* hinges precisely on the awareness of such universal moral restraints.

In early-twentieth-century Italy, Mazzini’s democratic political thought and his related conception of the nation were deliberately perverted by the Fascist regime. Fascism aimed at imposing its cultural hegemony over the Italian nation by depicting itself as the heir of the Risorgimento. Thus Giovanni Gentile, the leading philosopher of Fascism, set out to fabricate an image of Mazzini that was meant to exalt an expansionist ideal of the nation. Gentile went about his task by intentionally underplaying and misrepresenting Mazzini’s democratic republicanism. He also quite skillfully exploited several ambiguities inherent in Mazzini’s philosophy and flowery political rhetoric. In short, Fascism ended up constructing an influential image of Mazzini as the father of an idea of “national mission” that could be used to support an aggressive foreign policy and the sacrifice of individual freedom to the supreme good of the state.²⁹

Mazzini certainly believed that each nation, like each individual human being, ought to pursue a specific “mission.” But the Fascist reading stretches Mazzini’s political thought beyond recognition. Indeed, his idea of national mission cannot be adequately understood outside of his democratic and universalist political philosophy. For Mazzini, each nation can accomplish its own mission only insofar as it acts according to the universal “law of Humanity”; this requires that it grant civil and political rights to all its citizens, while also educating them according to an ethos of republican duties and international brotherhood.³⁰ Thus Mazzini spoke of “mission” in a peculiarly idealistic manner, to suggest the specificity and unique character of different individual and national vocations. Like the American transcendentalists and German romantics who were his contemporaries, he used the concept of mission as a counterpoise to Enlightenment philosophies built on

²⁸ Mazzini, “On the Duties of Man,” chapter 5 of this book, 92; emphasis in original.

²⁹ See Giovanni Gentile, “Mazzini,” in *I Profeti del Risorgimento Italiano* (Florence: Sansoni, 1944 [1923]), 26ss.

³⁰ Mazzini, “On the Superiority of Representative Government,” and “Humanity and Country” [1836], in chapters 2 and 3 of this book. Italy’s own specific mission, Mazzini argued toward the end of his life, “consists in promoting the principle of Nationality as the supreme foundation of international order and as a guarantee of future peace.” Cf. Mazzini, “Principles of International Politics” [1871], chapter 22 of this book, 232.

abstract views of reason and the individual. Mazzini's frequent and admittedly somewhat vague references to distinct national missions are best understood as an effort to emphasize each people's unique contribution to the progress of humanity as a whole. The nation should embody the universal language of humanity, spoken in the tongue of each specific people.³¹

For Mazzini, only if the nation respects humanity (and thus not merely its own citizens, but also foreigners in its midst and abroad) does it properly deserve international recognition and respect. He identified two principal kinds of duties that ought to guide human behavior: duties toward humanity and duties toward one's own polity, respectively; hence *moral* and *political* duties. Duties toward humanity come first, and they confer moral legitimacy to a people's will to become a nation.³² Hence in his view, the "nation" was not merely a political concept or a descriptive term but above all a *principle*—a normative ideal whose goal was to elevate and dignify the political practice of nation-building and self-determination.³³

In Mazzini's view, all nations have an equivalent moral value; there is no hierarchy among them. Like the romantic philosopher Johann G. Herder, he saw each nation as contributing to the life of humanity in its own peculiar and irreplaceable way.³⁴ Yet Mazzini restated Herder's idea with an important variation: while Herder had emphasized prepolitical factors, such as race or ancestral traditions, as constitutive of the nation, Mazzini gave the nation an essentially political meaning as "commonwealth" or government by the people, based on a written constitution.³⁵

³¹ Mazzini's idea of a "Universal Mind" frequently evoked in this context echoes one of the themes most recurrent in the writings of American transcendentalists, like those of Margaret Fuller Ossoli and Ralph Waldo Emerson, who knew and admired Mazzini's work and political project, and, in Fuller's case, actually devoted their lives to his cause. Cf. Margaret Fuller Ossoli, *Memoirs*, 2 vols., ed. Ralph Waldo Emerson, William Henry Channing, and James Freeman Clarke (New York: Burt Franklin, 1972 [1884]), 2:266–67.

³² For a more detailed discussion, see Nadia Urbinati, "'A Common Law of Nations': Giuseppe Mazzini's Democratic Nationality," *Journal of Modern Italian Studies* 1 (1996): 207–8.

³³ See Levi, *La filosofia politica di Giuseppe Mazzini*, 202.

³⁴ An important contribution to the diffusion of Herder's ideas in Mazzini's time, and particularly in the 1830s, was the French edition of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit* [*Idées sur la philosophie de l'histoire de l'humanité*] by Edgar Quinet in 1837.

³⁵ Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 6. For this reason, Mazzini has been recently included among the theorists of a liberal, as opposed to communitarian, nationalism. See especially Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 96–97; Margaret Canovan, *Nationhood and Political Theory* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 1996), 6–9; and Michael Freeden, *Liberal Languages* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 212.

For the German romantic philosophers, the nation was a defensive project—an organic body with some pristine and unique characteristics to be protected from the infiltration of any foreign culture, at the political and ethical level. According to this view, the nation had *constitutive* qualities that communication with the outside could weaken but never alter significantly, and the organization of the state ought to follow and respect the national character. The nation's temporal dimension was the past. What for Mazzini were “indications” of the nation (language, territory, literature, ethnicity), were here its ultimate foundations and legitimate justification. In short, for the German romantics the nation was morally and politically prior to its own members—a communitarian ethical unity that gave meaning to the life and identity of individual human beings.³⁶

For Mazzini, on the other hand, the politics of nationality was primarily a process aimed at redefining the legitimacy of sovereign power. Hence the achievement of national self-determination and independence would be an accomplishment of, rather than an alternative to, the message of the Enlightenment and the legacy of the French Revolution.³⁷ Equality, popular participation, and an awareness of universal moral duties were the principles that made Mazzini's nation the agent of a new cosmopolitan order. He understood quite well that by celebrating the “purity” of a supposedly prepolitical entity, nationalism could easily deteriorate into an aggressive chauvinism.³⁸ This led him to insist that the nation was actually not the last word of history, but only a necessary intermediate step toward further stages of human progress:

We do not believe in the timelessness of races. We do not believe in the timelessness of languages. . . . We believe in a sole and constant general law.

³⁶The philosopher Johann G. Fichte, for instance, had no doubt that the German nation was essentially timeless: it was a unity “already achieved, completed, and existing,” waiting to be liberated from the influence of “its fusion with foreign people” by means of a “new education,” which would “mold the Germans into a corporate body.” Cf. Johann G. Fichte, *Addresses to the German Nation*, trans. and ed. G. A. Kelly (New York: Harper and Row, 1968 [1807–8]), 45, 3, 12, 49. The philosophical perspective of Herder was not markedly different, even though he never translated his cultural nationalism into a political one. Herder's polemic was with imported culture (primarily French culture) and abstract universalism. Cf. Johann G. Herder, *On Social and Political Culture*, trans. and ed. F. M. Barnard (London, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 186–87.

³⁷Not surprisingly, among those who best understood the revolutionary implications of Mazzini's political conception of the nation was an antidemocratic liberal, Lord Acton, who listed Mazzini's idea of nationality, together with democracy and socialism, as ideologies “impugning the present distribution of power” in the name of political equality. Cf. Lord Acton, “Nationality” [1862], in *Essays on Freedom and Power*, ed. Gertrude Himelfarb (Glencoe, IL: The Free Press, 1948), 169–84.

³⁸Nationalism, he wrote, would drive each people “to break the intimate bond among human beings” and undermine “the perception of mutual needs that unites the nations with one another.” Cf. Mazzini, “Nationalité,” 127, 132–33.

Therefore we also believe in a sole and constant general objective; and we believe in progressive development toward this given objective, which can only be achieved by means of coming closer together—that is, through *association*.³⁹

Mazzini rejected nationalism as both politically dangerous and morally wrong. Nationalism—that is, an ideology of national self-assertion untempered by the awareness of universal moral duties—interrupts what Mazzini took to be a natural process of *communication* and even empathy among peoples. It turns nationality into a zero-sum game—a contest between supposedly different degrees of human perfection. Mazzini's harsh criticism of the post-1849 politics of national unification and independence in Italy and elsewhere under the banners of monarchical regimes was a lucid diagnosis of the abandonment of democratic patriotism in favor of a crude and chauvinistic nationalism. National unification had become a largely top-down enterprise—the achievement of diplomatic and military elites rather than of popular movements. With the democratic movements sidelined and oppressed, he pointed out, “the question of *territory*” had wholly overshadowed “the question of *liberty*.” Nation-building had thus become a question of force and self-assertion, leading “to a narrow and mean *Nationalism*” that was inherently “jealous of everything that surrounded it.”⁴⁰ In sum, whereas communitarians and romantic nationalists theorized the idea of mutual impermeability and untranslatability among cultures and languages, Mazzini proposed instead the idea of a subterranean unity of the human race. The active participation of individuals in free democratic nations, he believed, would teach them to sympathize with foreign peoples and look beyond the narrowness of their own national culture and prejudices.

DEMOCRACY AND SELF-DETERMINATION AS MEANS TO GLOBAL PEACE

The modern ideal of a peaceful international order based on liberty was first put forward by cosmopolitan philosophers in the eighteenth century. Beginning with the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, Immanuel Kant, and the Saint-Simonians, European democrats and republicans had outlined the idea of a voluntary “federation,” or association, of autonomous nations in a covenant of mutual assistance and cooperation. In the nineteenth century, Mazzini reinterpreted this tradition and developed it further in his own original way.

³⁹Mazzini, “Humanity and Country,” chapter 3 of this book, 55; emphasis in original.

⁴⁰Mazzini, “Nationality and Cosmopolitanism,” chapter 3 of this book, 60; and “Letter to a German,” in *Letters*, 19, 21.

According to Mazzini, the main problem of Europe in the past had been the lack of a common belief in democracy as the universal form of political organization. "Humanity was still ignored. . . . Each nation . . . had foreigners or barbarians in its own midst; millions of men not admitted to the religious rites of citizenship and believed to be of an inferior nature—slaves among the free."⁴¹ Yet he observed that in the mid nineteenth century, across Europe increasingly large segments of society were demanding to participate in politics, while subject peoples claimed the right to shape their own destiny by means of national self-determination. Based on this observation and his own deepest convictions, Mazzini identified an "indisputable tendency" in his epoch toward a reconstitution of the European political order in accordance with the principles of nationality and democracy.

Mazzini also crucially believed that the moral progress achieved through the establishment of independent, democratic governments at the domestic level would greatly facilitate the emergence of a more peaceful international order. Once established, free democratic nations based on political transparency and popular consent would gradually establish a new type of international relations among themselves:

These states, which have remained divided, hostile, and jealous of one another so long as their national banner merely represented the narrow interests of a dynasty or caste, will gradually become more and more intimately associated *through the medium of democracy*. The nations will be sisters. Free and independent . . . in the organization of their domestic affairs, they will *gradually unite around a common faith*, and they will enter a common pact to regulate all matters related to their international life.⁴²

The English political realist E. H. Carr once suggested that according to Mazzini, the spread of popular government and national self-determination would result in a natural "harmony of interests" among democracies.⁴³ Mazzini was certainly an idealist, but he was less politically naïve than several of his critics, including Carr, have tended to assume. For Mazzini there was little doubt that democratically governed nation-states would continue to have many different and often outright conflicting interests. However, he anticipated that established constitutional democracies would be able to resolve those differences in a nonviolent, cooperative manner. Mazzini's intuition was highly original,

⁴¹ Mazzini, "On the Duties of Man," chapter 5 of this book, 90.

⁴² Mazzini, "From a Revolutionary Alliance to the United States of Europe," [1850] chapter 8 of this book, 126; emphasis added.

⁴³ E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis* (London: Palgrave, 2001), 45.

and it went beyond Kant's previous theory on the peaceful inclinations of republican governments in some important regards.

Mazzini's argument about a separate peace among democracies relies on both popular education and what he expected would be the international incentives facing democratic regimes. First, Mazzini identified a crucial pedagogical element in universal suffrage and other forms of popular participation. He believed that genuine democracy *within* states, combined with a generalized humanitarian education, would put in motion a moral culture that would challenge existing practices of exclusion and discrimination in the name of a common humanity. In other words, democratic citizens would learn to recognize all human beings as equals and to respect the freedom and independence of other nations.⁴⁴ Mazzini thus considered democratic government at the domestic level and the ensuing moral progress to be necessary conditions for a more peaceful international order. Yet they would hardly be sufficient. At best, the citizens of democratic nation-states would come to recognize their duties toward humanity and therefore broadly support a peaceful foreign policy.

But Mazzini was also acutely aware of international systemic constraints resulting from the condition of anarchy among nations and the related, permanent insecurity. He understood that democratic nations, although peacefully inclined, would not be able to fully renounce war so long as powerful and potentially aggressive despotic states continued to exist in their neighborhood. Mazzini expected, not without reason, that the old European despots would "for a long time look down with instincts of envy and suspicion" on any newly arising democracy.⁴⁵ He was convinced that even the survival of democracy itself would be constantly threatened under similar circumstances: "No conquest of liberty in a nation can function for long unless an analogous process is achieved in the nations that surround it."⁴⁶

Young and still fragile democracies would therefore have strong incentives to enter into a mutual defensive "pact," or alliance, with other democracies, aimed at defending their shared values (what Mazzini calls their "common faith") and domestic political achievements. Ideally, one of them would take the lead to overcome what in contemporary language we might call collective action problems and constitute a focal point for their federal association. Not surprisingly,

⁴⁴Mazzini insists that for this purpose, "there shall be a universally applied plan" of popular education, "various encouragements shall be offered to the arts and sciences," and "the founding of public libraries, newspapers, prizes, and universities should be actively promoted." Cf. Mazzini, "On the Superiority of Representative Government," chapter 2 of this book, 52.

⁴⁵Mazzini, "Principles of International Politics" [1871], chapter 22 of this book, 236.

⁴⁶Mazzini, "From a Revolutionary Alliance to the United States of Europe," chapter 8 of this book, 132.

Mazzini insisted toward the end of his life that a newly united Italy, having the potential to become a liberal great power, should accomplish this leadership function: "If Italy wants to be able to influence future international developments, its first priority in foreign policy should be to make itself the soul and center of a League of Europe's smaller States, closely united in a *collective defence pact* against the possible usurpations of one or the other great Power."⁴⁷ But on several occasions he speculated that perhaps Great Britain, or even the United States, might be better equipped to fulfill this function of democratic leadership.⁴⁸

Europe's new democracies would have to pursue a principled foreign policy and make their peaceful intentions as explicit as possible, to increase their mutual trust and reduce the likelihood of accidental conflicts: "What applies to all nations is especially true of rising nations. The morality . . . of the standards that guide their political conduct is not just a matter of duty; it also affects their future to a significant degree."⁴⁹ Mazzini generally saw publicity in all matters related to foreign affairs as an absolute practical and moral requirement for democratic nations, particularly in their relations with other democracies: "Disclose everything to the people. Not even a single negotiation should be kept secret; not a single demand should remain hidden from the public eye."⁵⁰

The argument that transparent behavior in accordance with certain basic moral standards can foster the buildup of mutual trust among nations has since become a central tenet of liberal thinking on international relations. John Rawls, for instance, argues that when basic standards of international morality (enshrined in what he calls the "Law of Peoples") are "honored by peoples over a certain period of time . . . peoples tend to develop mutual trust and confidence in one another"; this makes it possible to approach genuine "democratic peace" and thus achieve international "stability for the right reasons."⁵¹ It may be interesting to note that Mazzini himself sometimes referred to the settled norms of international morality as the "Law of Peoples," drawing on the ancient Latin notion of *jus gentium*.⁵²

Mazzini was no political economist; yet he shared with political thinkers and philosophers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, such as Adam Smith, Montesquieu, Kant, and J. S. Mill, the belief that

⁴⁷Ibid., 236, emphasis added.

⁴⁸See, e.g., Mazzini, "On Public Opinion and England's International Leadership" [1847] and "America as a Leading Nation in the Cause of Liberty" [1865], chapters 17 and 20 of this book.

⁴⁹Mazzini, "Principles of International Politics," chapter 22 of this book, 224.

⁵⁰Mazzini, "On Publicity in Foreign Affairs" [1835], chapter 14 of this book, 172.

⁵¹John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 44–45.

⁵²Mazzini, "On Publicity in Foreign Affairs," chapter 14 of this book, 169.

growing *economic interdependence* could be a powerful stimulus for peace in its own right. He thought that liberal Europe in the mid nineteenth century was “so closely united . . . at the level of commercial interests” that no rise or fall of exchange rates could take place in London or Paris without the shock being felt elsewhere.⁵³ Any hypothetical war among liberal states would now inevitably undermine the transnational financial foundations of their prosperity. The anticipated enormous costs of war among liberal democracies would result in powerful additional incentives to resolve disputes peacefully and preserve the peace.

Finally, Mazzini expected that democratic nations would increasingly establish various covenants and federative arrangements among themselves to put their alliance on more solid institutional foundations. Yet he remained short on details concerning the specific institutional structure of these future international federations. He thought that the specific configuration of international federative arrangements, like the domestic constitutional structure of democracies, would best be determined by future generations according to their particular preferences and their needs.⁵⁴ At the European level, the growing trust among democracies and their common interests would probably lead to the establishment of a “large international democratic association” with its own parliamentary committee. Each nation would be represented on the parliamentary committee by an individual plenipotentiary with an equally weighted vote, according to the principle of one-nation, one-vote. Presumably one day there would also be a European Court of Arbitration to adjudicate international disputes, which would further reduce the state of lawlessness among nations.⁵⁵ Ideally, the European federation of democracies would culminate in the constitution of a fully integrated United States of Europe. Although Mazzini’s immediate concern was the revolutionary transition from despotism to democracy, he insisted on several occasions that “our [long-term] goal is to create the United States of Europe.”⁵⁶

⁵³Mazzini, “On Public Opinion and England’s International Leadership,” chapter 17 of this book, 201. Liberals since Montesquieu have pointed out that growing international interdependence and the related, greatly increased costs of any violent disruption would produce powerful incentives for peace. For an influential recent reformulation of the classical liberal argument, see Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, *Power and Interdependence: World Politics in Transition* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1977).

⁵⁴To Mazzini this was quite obvious: “We cannot at this time fully erect the Temple of our faith; the peoples will erect it when the time is ripe.” Cf. “Toward a Holy Alliance of the Peoples,” chapter 7 of this book, 128.

⁵⁵Mazzini, “On Nonintervention” [1851], chapter 19 of this book, 218; and “Toward a Holy Alliance of the Peoples,” chapter 7 of this book; see also Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 154.

⁵⁶Mazzini, “From a Revolutionary Alliance to the United States of Europe,” chapter 8 of this book, 135. For an early, enthusiastic assessment of Mazzini’s pan-European vision, see Gwilym O. Griffith, *Mazzini: Prophet of Modern Europe* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932).

Mazzini's views on the relationship between democracy and international peace, although undoubtedly quite speculative, anticipated several key elements of the current scholarly debate concerning the hypothesis of a separate "democratic peace." Contemporary international relations scholars have sought to explain why over the past two centuries consolidated liberal democracies have never engaged in war with one another, although they have been involved in numerous wars with nondemocracies. Michael Doyle, in particular, has traced his explanation of a separate peace among liberal democracies back to Kant's essay "Perpetual Peace."⁵⁷ But the hypothesis that liberal democracies are peacefully inclined only in their mutual relations, while they will continue to fight against despotic regimes, is based on an original reconstruction of the Kantian argument.

Kant requires in his famous Second Definitive Article of Perpetual Peace that "*each nation, for the sake of its own security,*" enter along with all other nations into a voluntary and loosely institutionalized international federation.⁵⁸ He nowhere implies that membership in this pacific federation (*foedus pacificum*) shall be limited to republics. Indeed, Kant scholars have emphasized that he probably "did not sanction a rigid dichotomization of the world between (peaceful) interliberal and (warring) liberal-nonliberal zones."⁵⁹ Kant revealingly thought that most nonrepublican states would first have to overcome the international state of war, by joining the *foedus pacificum* and thus morally committing to nonaggression, before they could develop a republican constitution that would in turn further consolidate international peace: "*The problem of establishing a perfect civil constitution is subordinate to the problem of a law-governed external relationship with other states, and cannot be solved un-*

⁵⁷ Michael W. Doyle, "Kant, Liberal Legacies, and Foreign Affairs," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 12 (3) (1983): 213. Following Doyle's seminal research, several contemporary political scientists have based their arguments concerning a putative separate, or "dyadic," peace among democracies on a reconstruction of Kant's political thought. See especially Bruce Russett and John Oneal, *Triangulating Peace: Democracy, Interdependence, and International Organizations* (New York: Norton, 2001). For a concise discussion, see also Michael Doyle and Stefano Recchia, "Liberalism and International Relations," in *International Encyclopedia of Political Science* (London: Sage, 2010).

⁵⁸ Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 102, emphasis added. Kant recognizes that the initial establishment of such a federation could be facilitated if one powerful republic were to take the lead: "For if by good fortune one powerful and enlightened nation can form a republic (which by its nature is inclined to seek peace), this will provide a focal point for federal association among other states" (104). Yet he nowhere suggests that further membership in the *foedus pacificum* would be limited to *republics*.

⁵⁹ John MacMillan, "Immanuel Kant and the Democratic Peace," in *Classical Theory in International Relations*, ed. Beate Jahn (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 58; see also Georg Cavallar, "Kantian Perspectives on Democratic Peace: Alternatives to Doyle," *Review of International Studies* 27 (2001), esp. 243-6.

less the latter is also solved.”⁶⁰ Hence for Kant, perpetual peace can be achieved only after virtually all states have joined the *foedus pacificum*, thus formally renouncing war as an instrument of foreign policy, and set up a republican constitution.⁶¹

The first to explicitly outline the possibility of a separate peace among democratic nations was not Kant, but Mazzini. It should be noted that Mazzini had probably never read Kant’s political writings and was only superficially familiar with the latter’s ethics.⁶² Moreover, although writing more than half a century after Kant, Mazzini did not have significantly more empirical evidence on which to base his expectation. By the mid nineteenth century, Great Britain, Switzerland, and France (from 1830 to 1848), as well as the United States, were broadly liberal-constitutional nations, although none of them was a full-fledged democracy according to Mazzini’s ideal. Yet Mazzini boldly foresaw that established constitutional democracies would not engage in war with one another and would indeed establish friendly, cooperative relations among themselves, although for defensive reasons they might still have to fight against despotic states.⁶³

THE ROCKY ROAD TO PERPETUAL PEACE: INSURGENCY, INSURRECTION, AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTION

Mazzini clearly believed that the spread of democracy and national self-determination would lay solid foundations for the achievement of global peace in the long run. However, his primary intellectual as well as practical concerns had to do more with the *means* by which independent democratic nations could be brought about. Mazzini was no liberal pacifist who believed in a natural “harmony of interests,” like his contemporaries Richard Cobden and John Bright. His fundamental reasoning was that where despotic oppression and foreign domination made peaceful political contestation all but impossible, violent insurrections might be justified in the short run to establish free and self-determining democracies in the future. These conditions applied to mid-nineteenth-century Italy, in the face of harsh repression by the Austrian and Bour-

⁶⁰Kant, “Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Purpose” [1784], in *Kant: Political Writings*, 47; emphasis in original.

⁶¹For Kant, as for Mazzini, progress toward peace is ultimately contingent on the moral progress of individuals, and republican government provides the framework within which such progress is possible. For an excellent discussion of Kant’s international theory, see Andrew Hurrell, “Kant and the Kantian Paradigm in International Relations,” *Review of International Studies* 16 (1990): 196–97.

⁶²Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory*, 97; Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 229.

⁶³Most wars, he pointed out, would continue to be “but the result of mutual fear.” Cf. Mazzini, “Nationality and Cosmopolitanism,” chapter 3 of this book, 61.

bon despots and their local puppet principalities.⁶⁴ Yet Mazzini was neither a warmonger who invariably called for violent insurrection, nor a crusading liberal who blindly invoked international military interventions for the sake of freedom and democracy. His often inflammatory rhetoric and his repeated calls on established liberal nations to “support” foreign peoples in their struggle against despotic oppression have misled several Anglo-American readers and especially international relations scholars in this regard.⁶⁵

Throughout his life, Mazzini insisted that national liberation and the establishment of democratic governments would have to be achieved through primarily *domestic political struggles*. Wherever possible, those struggles ought to be peaceful. Public opinion and its mobilization for the national cause always remained central to Mazzini’s republican project.⁶⁶ Even when brutal governmental oppression made violence the only means available, wanton destruction should always be avoided and violence should be used with as much circumspection as the circumstances allowed:

We disagree with those dreamers who preach peace at any cost, even that of dishonor, and who do not strive to make Justice the sole basis of any lasting peace. We believe war to be sacred under certain circumstances. But war must always be fought within the limits of necessity, when there is no other way to achieve the good. . . . No war must ever be contaminated by the spirit of vengeance, or by the brutal ferocity of a boundless egoism.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Mazzini’s international thought is thus quite compatible with the recent empirical finding that while consolidated liberal democracies appear indeed to have established a separate peace among themselves, *transitions* to democracy are often rocky and violent. See Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005).

⁶⁵ For instance, Kenneth Waltz suggests that Mazzini unabashedly called for interventionist “crusades to establish the conditions under which all states can coexist in perpetual peace.” Cf. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001 [1959]), 3, 111. Martin Wight and John Vincent similarly claim that the Italian revolutionary was advocating a liberal crusade in support of democracy and “international intervention against despotic governments.” Martin Wight, *Four Seminal Thinkers in International Theory*, 107; and John R. Vincent, *Nonintervention and International Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974), 60–61.

⁶⁶ Among the available means to rally public opinion behind the cause of national liberation, Mazzini mentions politically active associations, public meetings, and perhaps most important, the press and popular newspapers. Cf. Mazzini, “Letters on the State and Prospects of Italy” [1839], in *Scritti Editi ed Inediti*, 22:166. See also Gaetano Salvemini, *Mazzini*, trans. I. M. Rawson (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1961), 70; and Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 51.

⁶⁷ Mazzini, “Neither Pacifism nor Terror: Considerations on the Paris Commune and the French National Assembly,” chapter 13 of this book, 157.

Mazzini always strongly opposed terrorist activity against civilians, although he supported guerrilla warfare against the members of regular armies. "We do not want terror," he insisted, and then went on to "reject terror as both cowardly and immoral."⁶⁸ In the long run, any revolutionary struggle would lack legitimacy and be doomed to failure, unless a majority of the population was clearly willing to support it.⁶⁹

Historically, his views on political violence reflected the experience of the French revolution and subsequent Napoleonic wars. The older generation of Italian patriots had fought for Napoleon's army in Spain between 1808 and 1814, where they had experienced a fierce and highly effective guerrilla-type resistance by the local population. In the 1820s and 1830s, it was quite natural for those Italian patriots to suggest the formation of similar guerrilla bands for the fight against despotism in Italy, given the country's rough and mountainous terrain. Mazzini quickly made their arguments his own.⁷⁰ He also crucially theorized how guerrilla-type resistance could become part of a broader strategy of national emancipation: guerrilla bands, he argued in one of his earliest essays, are the "precursors of the nation," and they should "attempt to rouse the nation into insurrection."⁷¹

Mazzini always thought of the Italian struggle for national unification as part of a broader European battle aimed at the emancipation of oppressed nationalities all over Central and Southeastern Europe, from Poland to the Balkans. In his writings, he therefore repeatedly called for the organization of a "Holy Alliance of the Peoples," a transnational association of European revolutionary leaders who would coordinate resistance movements and popular insurrections against the Holy Alliance of despotic monarchs. Throughout his decade-long exile, he repeatedly tried to put this idea into practice, seeking to establish an organization of revolutionaries from various European countries. He was convinced that only if the oppressed peoples rose up against their despotic oppressors all at once could their national emancipation have a realistic chance of success.⁷²

⁶⁸ Mazzini, "Against the Foreign Imposition of Domestic Institutions" [1851], chapter 9 of this book, 138; see also Mack Smith, *Mazzini*, 9.

⁶⁹ The motto of revolutionary guerrilla bands should thus be: "Respect for women, for property, for the rights of individuals, and for the crops." Mazzini, "Rules for the Conduct of Guerrilla Bands" [1832], chapter 6 of this book, 111.

⁷⁰ Franco della Peruta, "La guerra di liberazione spagnola e la teoria della guerra per bande nel Risorgimento," in della Peruta, *L'Italia del Risorgimento: Problemi, momenti e figure* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1997), 11–29.

⁷¹ Mazzini, "Rules for the Conduct of Guerrilla Bands," chapter 6 of this book, 111.

⁷² "What we need [is] . . . a single union of all the European peoples who are striving toward the same goal. . . . When we will rise up simultaneously in every country where our movement is currently active, we will win. Foreign intervention [by the despots] will then become impossible." Cf. Mazzini, "Toward a Holy Alliance of the Peoples," chapter 7 of this book, 121.

But for all his insistence on the need for a pan-European revolutionary alliance, he believed that the forces of despotism in each country would have to be essentially defeated by domestic revolutionaries on their own. Mazzini unequivocally stressed that liberty and democracy could never be delivered to an oppressed population from the outside. Subject peoples should “not look for liberty at the hands of the foreigner.”⁷³ Each people should find their own path to liberty and collective emancipation, relying on their own memories of political oppression and their broader cultural and historical background. “The nation alone has the inviolable right to *choose* its own institutions, to *correct* them and *change* them when they no longer correspond to its needs.”⁷⁴ Moreover, if liberty did not grow domestically, it could hardly be sustained. Mazzini’s republicanism requires that each people develop their own *ethos* of liberty, by fighting for it if necessary and actively participating in its sustenance and progress day after day. Even if democratic revolutions were unsuccessful in the short run, they would instill a widespread love of liberty and country and thereby prepare the ground for democracy in the long run.

The view that democracy achieved with the help of foreign armies would either not last, or would otherwise not be worthy of its name, is today most closely associated with J. S. Mill. The most famous articulation of Mill’s views on the legitimacy of popular insurrections for the sake of national self-determination, and his related rejection of foreign-imposed regime change, can be found in his 1859 essay *A Few Words on Non-Intervention*.⁷⁵ Yet Mill’s views on these issues had already been outlined by Mazzini over the previous three decades. Mill and Mazzini were acquaintances; they met several times during the latter’s exile in London, and their relationship was characterized by mutual admiration.⁷⁶

Mazzini’s views on the conditions that justify international military intervention were ultimately quite conservative. He believed that if a

⁷³ Mazzini, “Manifesto of Young Italy” [1831], chapter 1 of this book, 36.

⁷⁴ Mazzini, “On the Superiority of Representative Government,” chapter 2 of this book, 50; emphasis in original. Elsewhere, Mazzini insists that “if a people were to impose their own solution to the specific social problems of another country, they would thereby commit an act of usurpation.” Cf. Mazzini, “Against the Foreign Imposition of Domestic Institutions,” chapter 9 of this book, 140.

⁷⁵ John Stuart Mill, “A Few Words on Nonintervention” [1859], in *Essays on Politics and Culture*, ed. Gertrude Himmelfarb (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1973).

⁷⁶ Mill openly acknowledged his “highest admiration for Mazzini,” although he did not always sympathize with the latter’s revolutionary mode of working. Cf. J.S. Mill, “Letter to Peter Alfred Taylor,” in *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, vol. 17 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1963 [1870]), 1759. See also Maria Teresa Pichetto, “Alcune note su Mazzini, Mill e l’ambiente politico inglese di metà ottocento,” in *Giuseppe Mazzini e John Stuart Mill*, ed. Andrea Bocchi and Claudio Palazzolo (Pisa: Plus Edizioni, 2004).

people genuinely wanted to be free, under most circumstances they would be able to throw off any native despotism on their own, supported by a transnational alliance of republican solidarity. Only when the local despot was being actively supported by foreign armies and foreign money could patriotic insurgents no longer succeed. In the face of such “cooperation of despots against peoples,” the liberal powers and especially Great Britain should in turn abandon their policy of non-intervention.⁷⁷

Mazzini was making a case for *counterintervention* aimed at neutralizing any previous intervention in support of the despots. If the rule of nonintervention is to mean anything, he insisted, “it must mean that in every state the government must deal directly and alone with its own people.”⁷⁸ Mazzini was again developing his normative arguments against the backdrop of the European political reality of his time. Since the defeat of Napoleon in 1815, the conservative great powers had been openly supporting each other, sometimes intervening militarily on each other’s behalf to crush popular uprisings that threatened to overturn the status quo.⁷⁹

In Mazzini’s view, as soon as a foreign power had intervened militarily to crush an ongoing democratic insurrection, liberal-constitutional states would acquire a right and indeed a *prima facie* duty of counter-intervention:

If the government of a state is despotic and if the people . . . resist that government, carry on a war of the press against it, and at last, in spite of police and military force, defeat it; then . . . the decision is final. . . . But should the government of a neighboring despotic state, either invited by the vanquished party or fearing the contagion of liberal ideas in its own territory, militarily invade the convulsed state and so interrupt or repeal the revolution, then the principle of Nonintervention is at an end, and all moral obligation on other states to observe it is from that moment annulled.⁸⁰

The only legitimate goal of counterintervention would be to rebalance the situation on the ground, so as “to make good all prior infrac-

⁷⁷ Mazzini, “On Nonintervention,” chapter 19 of this book, 217.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 216.

⁷⁹ For instance, in June 1849 Russia had sent its imperial army into Hungary at Austria’s request to crush a nationalist uprising there. Earlier that same year, France and Austria had answered a call for military assistance by the pope, dispatching an expeditionary force to crush the revolutionary Roman Republic led by Mazzini himself. And since the early 1820s, Austria had repeatedly intervened on the Italian Peninsula to support its local vassal states in the face of frequent popular uprisings.

⁸⁰ Mazzini, “On Nonintervention,” chapter 19 of this book, 216.

tions of the law of Noninterference" and leave the patriotic insurgents with a realistic chance of success.⁸¹ Thus for instance, the British should have first threatened and then actually executed a counterintervention on Italian soil in the spring of 1849, when the French had sent a military expedition to crush the revolutionary Roman republic. As Mazzini later recalled in a letter addressed to a British friend: "Ah! If you had in England, condescended to see that the *glorious* declaration of non-interference ought to have begun by taking away the French interference in Rome! How many troubles and sacrifices you would have saved us."⁸² But in most instances, he believed, the credible *threat* of counterintervention by a powerful liberal nation would be sufficient to deter despotic states from intervening in the first place. Hence it would certainly not be necessary for the British "government to plunge itself into a revolutionary crusade, which no one dreams of invoking."⁸³ Mazzini's argument on counterintervention was again closely echoed by J. S. Mill, who similarly argued that in the case of a native despotism upheld by foreign armies, the reasons for nonintervention would cease to exist.⁸⁴

More than anything else, Mazzini was seeking diplomatic assistance, or, as he liked to put it, "moral support" from other liberal nations and from Great Britain in particular. Toward the end of his life, he also increasingly hoped that significant help for the cause of democracy and national self-determination in Europe might be forthcoming from the United States of America. He believed that after the victory of Union forces in the American Civil War, the United States could—and should indeed—help European republicans to successfully face the many challenges that still confronted them:

You [the United States] have become a *leading* Nation. Now you must act as such. . . . you must feel that to stand aloof would be a sin; . . . You must then help your republican brothers, mainly morally, and

⁸¹ Ibid., 216. Mazzini never explicitly suggested that foreign imperial rule over a subject population, such as Austria's domination over northern Italy, constituted a sufficient cause for military intervention by the liberal great powers.

⁸² Mazzini, "Extract from a Letter to Peter Taylor" [1860], in *Mazzini's Letters to an English Family, 1855–1860*, ed. E. F. Richards (London: John Lane, 1922), 236.

⁸³ Mazzini, "The European Question: Foreign Intervention and National Self-Determination" [1847], chapter 16 of this book, 195.

⁸⁴ The similarity between Mazzini's and Mill's reasoning is again striking: "A people the most attached to freedom, the most capable of defending and making a good use of free institutions, may be unable to contend successfully for them against the military strength of another nation much more powerful. To assist a people thus kept down is not to disturb the balance of forces on which the permanent balance of freedom in a country depends, but to redress that balance when it is already unfairly and violently disturbed." Cf. John S. Mill, "A Few Words on Nonintervention," 383.

materially if needed, whenever the sacred battle is being fought and you have the ability to effectively inspire and support those who toil and bleed for truth and for justice.⁸⁵

When writing for British and American audiences, Mazzini sometimes conceded that in the short run, supporting his revolutionary movement would have led to increased political turmoil on the European continent. But he insisted that patriotic insurrections against despotic governments and foreign rule were a natural expression of people's desires and indeed part of God's "providential design." Lack of international support for those movements would have merely prolonged a bloody European conflict, which the forces of democracy would have finally won no matter what. Hence, even setting moral considerations aside, it would be in the enlightened self-interest of the liberal great powers to openly back Mazzini's revolutionary leadership, so that the conflict could be swiftly brought to an end and everyone might look forward to an epoch of international peace and prosperity.

Mazzini thought that foreign military intervention would be justified only in one additional instance beyond counterintervention—namely, to rescue populations abroad from systematic slaughter. His thinking on this matter remained quite tentative, yet he was in fact putting forward one of the earliest justifications for humanitarian intervention. He envisaged an international society in which liberal nations might combine as a matter of moral duty to counter egregious human rights violations committed within an independent state:

People begin to feel that . . . there are bonds of international duty binding all the nations of this earth together. Hence, the conviction is gaining ground that if on any spot of the world, even within the limits of an independent nation, some glaring wrong should be done, . . . —if, for example, there should be, as there has been in our time, a massacre of Christians within the dominions of the Turks—then other nations are not absolved from all concern in the matter simply because of the large distance between them and the scene of the wrong.⁸⁶

Mazzini's reflections on humanitarian intervention were probably spurred by repeated instances of European military interference in the Ottoman Empire, which ostensibly sought to protect local Christian populations from religiously motivated violence. As early as 1827, Russia, Great Britain, and France had intervened militarily in the Greek war

⁸⁵Mazzini, "America as a Leading Nation in the Cause of Liberty," chapter 20 of this book, 221. See also Howard R. Marraro, "Mazzini on American Intervention in European Affairs," *Journal of Modern History* 21 (2) (1949): 109–14.

⁸⁶Mazzini, "On Nonintervention," chapter 19 of this book, 218.

of independence, inflicting a decisive defeat to the Ottoman army (although humanitarian considerations were at best secondary in this context). Most significantly, in the summer of 1860 France dispatched six thousand troops to Lebanon to stop ongoing massacres of the local Christian Maronite population in the context of a bloody civil war; and the intervention had been collectively authorized by most of the European great powers.⁸⁷

Mazzini was certainly a progressive and in many regards a revolutionary; yet his intellectual frame of reference was that of a thoroughly nineteenth-century figure. Hence he also shared his contemporaries' attitude toward colonialism. Most fundamentally, he shared with them a philosophy of progress that portrayed most non-European peoples as backward, in need of being "educated" and trained to become ready for self-government. As he wrote to his mother in 1845, he believed "that Europe has been providentially called to conquer the rest of the world to progressive civilization."⁸⁸ Mazzini's paternalistic endorsement of colonialism as an instrument of Europe's "civilizing mission" echoed Mill's idea that "Nations which are still barbarous . . . should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners."⁸⁹ More generally, nineteenth-century reformist thinking was marked by Saint-Simon's stage theory of social evolution (which played an important role in Mazzini's own political thought) and by continental philosophy of history, particularly idealism (Mazzini welcomed the revival of Giambattista Vico's historicism). This led to a backlash against Enlightenment natural-rights theories in favor of the idea that civil and political liberties were historically contingent and required the achievement of a certain stage of social and moral development before they could be sustained. Distinguished nineteenth-century liberals, democrats, and revolutionaries therefore justified colonialism as a painful but neces-

⁸⁷See Martha Finnemore, *The Purpose of Intervention: Changing Beliefs about the Use of Force* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 58–62; and for a more detailed historical analysis, Gary Bass, *Freedom's Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention* (New York: Knopf, 2008).

⁸⁸Mazzini, *Letters*, 98. Several years later, he repeated the same basic point in a longer essay on international politics: a newly unified Italy should follow other European nations and "contribute to the great civilizing mission suggested by our times." An integral part of this mission would be for Italy to "invade and colonize the Tunisian lands when the opportunity presents itself." Mazzini, "Principles of International Politics," chapter 22 of this book, 238–39.

⁸⁹Mill, "A Few Words on Nonintervention," 377. In his classical treatise, *Considerations on Representative Government*, Mill similarly insisted that "subjection to a foreign government . . ., notwithstanding its inevitable evils, is often of the greatest advantage to a people, carrying them rapidly through several stages of progress." Cf. Mill, *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 264.

sary school of modernization and/or self-government for “backward” peoples.⁹⁰ Mazzini was no exception, although his insistence on popular consent as the primary criterion of political legitimacy suggests that he would have been invariably sympathetic to all movements of national self-determination, wherever they emerged.

In conclusion, Mazzini made a seminal contribution to the development of modern democratic republicanism, as well as to liberal-internationalist thinking on national self-determination and international politics more broadly. He developed an original, democratic conception of the nation as a political association of equals, and he crucially anticipated that democracy within states would create the conditions for lasting international peace.

Mazzini was a visionary and undoubtedly an idealist, in the sense that he deeply believed in the power of ideas to effect lasting political change. But he was also a sophisticated political thinker who based his normative arguments and passionate calls to action on a solid grasp of the actual political forces and emerging ideological trends that characterized his time. He understood that in mid-nineteenth-century Europe, as the industrial revolution took off in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, the people were yearning for deep-cutting social and political change, and the time had become ripe for an overthrow of the imperial and authoritarian structures of the *ancien régime*. Following Rousseau, he took human beings as they are and laws as they might be: the former as free and equal individuals with their own interests and passions, endowed with the ability to learn to live and associate peacefully with others; the latter as conditions that should channel the people’s energies and aspirations toward genuine moral and political emancipation.

⁹⁰ See William Bain, *Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).